

*Motion Respecting House Vote*

to settle the matter all by himself he is waiting until one of his champions in the leadership race takes over the battle. As I understand it this is going to be much delayed, because there seems to be a dearth of members on that side who have any familiarity with the weapon of truth. On occasion we in this house are accustomed to observing people who have a little difficulty in getting close to the truth. Some seem to find the idea repugnant and others just cannot find the idea.

There are times, Mr. Speaker, when some of us have to bend the truth a little. For example, the other day the hon. member for Northumberland (Mr. Hees), when replying to a question from the Secretary of State (Miss LaMarsh), proved that he sometimes has to bend the truth to remain a gentleman. I wish we could find such an honourable excuse for the Prime Minister.

I thought the most remarkable thing about the speech of the Prime Minister was the way he set out the case for the government by first stating what he said we had alleged our position to be. Since the easiest case to beat down is not the real position of your opponent but the position that you wish he would take, the Prime Minister began by misstating the position of the opposition. Reference to what the Prime Minister said, as found in *Hansard*, and to what the leader of our party said indicates that there is no basis for the Prime Minister's allegations.

Since the Prime Minister has misstated our position, Mr. Speaker, as a lawyer I ask myself why. When juries all over the world hear cases in court and listen to witnesses they soon find that one of the surest guides to which party is to be believed or to which piece of evidence is to be considered reliable is to determine who it is who uses the truth as much as possible. Whenever somebody makes a misstatement or a misquotation or distorts the facts, then automatically it is assumed that the truth is not going to help their case. In this particular situation the Prime Minister did not put forward the truth when talking about the position we had taken. Neither did he give us the whole truth when he quoted and referred to the authorities and to what the true position is. I think his argument that the vote was a snap vote, a trick and so on was very well dealt with by my leader.

I have been a member of this house for about ten years, and I think I can say that the course of business is pretty well set out.

[Mr. Nugent.]

Certainly I see nothing unusual in the manner in which the bill was brought on last week. The bill had been debated in the normal course of events. The government had announced when it would be taken up. The bill was debated on Thursday, February 15, but was not taken up on the Friday by agreement because the minister was going to be away. All members were aware that it would be taken up again on the Monday. Things followed their usual course on the Monday with resistance to the bill always present, stiffening all the time. Finally the formal vote was taken in the evening and the government was defeated.

I believe that the position the Prime Minister set out should be put on the record. I think I should illustrate exactly the sort of tactics used by the Prime Minister so we can examine just how much faith the Prime Minister has in his own arguments. I say this because I hope to show it is sheer presumption on the part of the Prime Minister to ask anybody to support the position of the government. As reported on page 6922 of *Hansard* for Friday last the Prime Minister said:

They claimed—

He was speaking of the opposition.

—and I am not quarrelling with their claim; I am putting their position—that parliament could do nothing until the government resigned or there was a dissolution, except perhaps to discuss opposition criticism of the Prime Minister.

The situation, Mr. Speaker, is simply this. No one made any such allegation. No one with knowledge of parliamentary procedure would argue that those were the only two possibilities. I think this is the nub of the difficulty, and it is where I have trouble understanding the position of those who would support the government in their present course of conduct. The bill in question was taken up in the normal way. It has always been my understanding during my ten years here that a vote on an important money bill is automatically a vote of confidence. Bills which the government lays stress on because they are important to its program are always matters of confidence. From time to time minor bills which are not essential to the government's program are defeated, and such a defeat is not considered a matter of confidence. The importance of bills varies and sometimes it is difficult to know whether a bill is or is not a matter of confidence. Nevertheless, a reliable guide is to look at what has been done with respect to matters of confidence in the past.